



**Testimony before the Labor and Public Employees Committee of the
Connecticut General Assembly
March 13, 2012**

My name is Peter Thor. I am the Policy and Planning Director for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 35,000 Connecticut public and private employee members.

Council 4 opposes H.B. No. 5400 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEM CONTRIBUTION RATE.

This bill hikes the statutory employee pension contribution rate by over 250%. At a time when most municipal employees have not seen an increase in their wages and have had to pay more for their health care, this would be amount to a substantial paycheck reduction. This proposed rate is unusually high, especially for a plan that deducts a portion of the benefit if the employee is eligible for Social Security. We oppose this bill.

Council 4 opposes H.B. No. 5403 (RAISED) AN ACT PROHIBITING LOBBYING BY STATE EMPLOYEES ON STATE TIME.

We are a bit stumped by this bill. As a rule of thumb, state employees do not lobby on state time. They are quite often ordered to testify or provide information by their employer to the legislature as experts. Do the proponents of the bill wish to stop this? When state employees testify in such a capacity it is not legally defined as lobbying. Do the proponents wish to stop employees acting on union business leave from providing information to the legislature? The executive and legislative branch have often requested union officials to testify before the Appropriations Committee on contract, pension and other matters. Are the proponents trying to stop this? This just seems to be one more bill aimed at sullyng the names of unions, or trying to make a routine practice look suspicious.

Council 4 opposes H.B. No. 5401 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING LEASEBACKS AND THE PREVAILING WAGE THRESHOLD.

We oppose any increase in the prevailing wage threshold. Unionized construction workers in Connecticut are experiencing a 40% unemployment rate. Developers are regularly caught, as recently happened on the Downtown Storrs project, violating the law by bringing undocumented workers onto construction sites. It is no time to weaken the middle class protection provided by the prevailing rate.

Council 4 supports H.B. No. 5433 (RAISED) AN ACT CREATING A PROCEDURE FOR PERSONAL CARE ATTENDANTS TO COLLECTIVELY BARGAIN WITH THE STATE and S.B. No. 352 (RAISED) AN ACT CREATING A PROCESS FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS TO COLLECTIVELY BARGAIN WITH THE STATE.

Every worker should be able to engage in collective bargaining. Our country drafted Article 23 of the United Nations Charter of Human Rights wish says that it is a basic human right for all people to unionize.

I would be happy to answer any question or provide any information. Thank you.